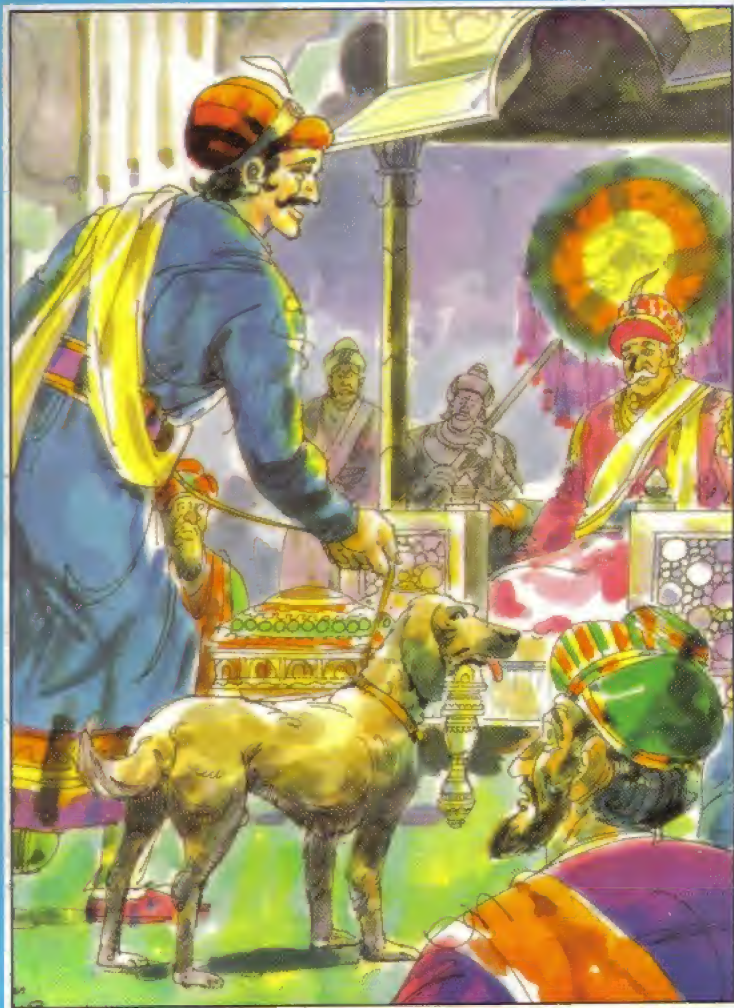


The Inimitable Birbal



PANDIT GANGARAM

BIRBAL HAD GAINED THE REPUTATION OF BEING A SKILFUL SOLVER OF PROBLEMS. ONE DAY, A BRAHMIN CALLED GANGARAM CAME TO HIM.

BIRBAL SAHIB,
I HAVE
A PROBLEM
WHICH ONLY YOU
CAN SOLVE.

WHAT
IS
IT?

I AM A BRAHMIN BY BIRTH. MY
FOREFATHERS WERE GREAT
SANSKRIT SCHOLARS.
EVERYONE CALLED
THEM PANDITS.

YES,
I REMEMBER
YOUR FATHER.

I HAVE NEITHER
MUCH LEARNING
NOR WEALTH.

DO YOU WANT
ME TO HELP
YOU GET
WORK?

NO, I AM CONTENTED
WITH MY LIFE. BUT I
HAVE JUST ONE WISH.
I WANT PEOPLE
TO ADDRESS ME
AS PANDIT.

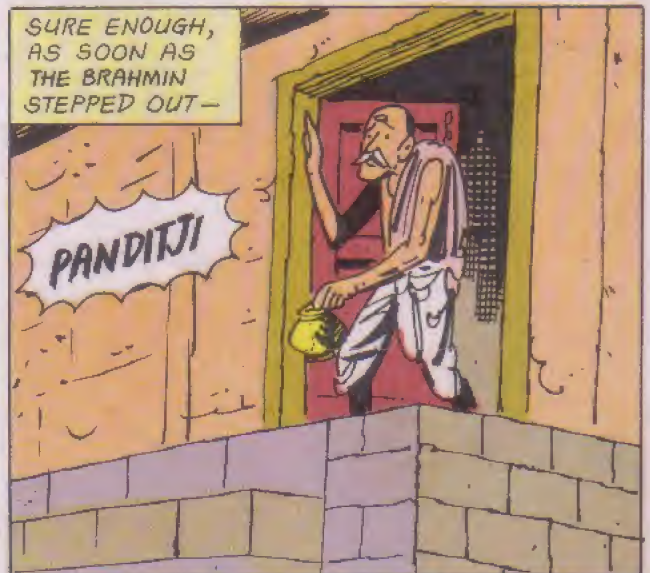
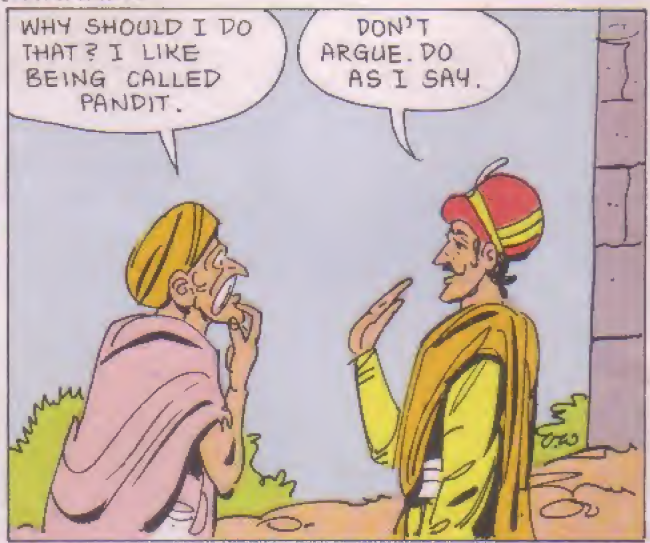
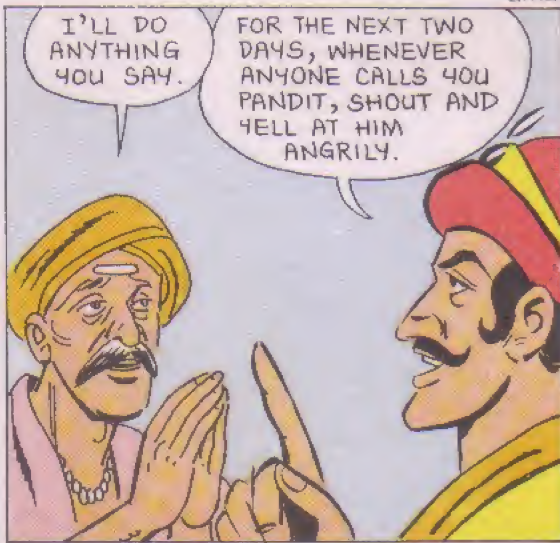
IS THAT ALL?
YOU ONLY WANT
TO BE
CALLED
PANDIT?

YES. I KNOW IT IS
DIFFICULT. BUT NO
TASK IS DIFFICULT
FOR YOU.

I CAN DO
IT IN JUST
TWO DAYS.

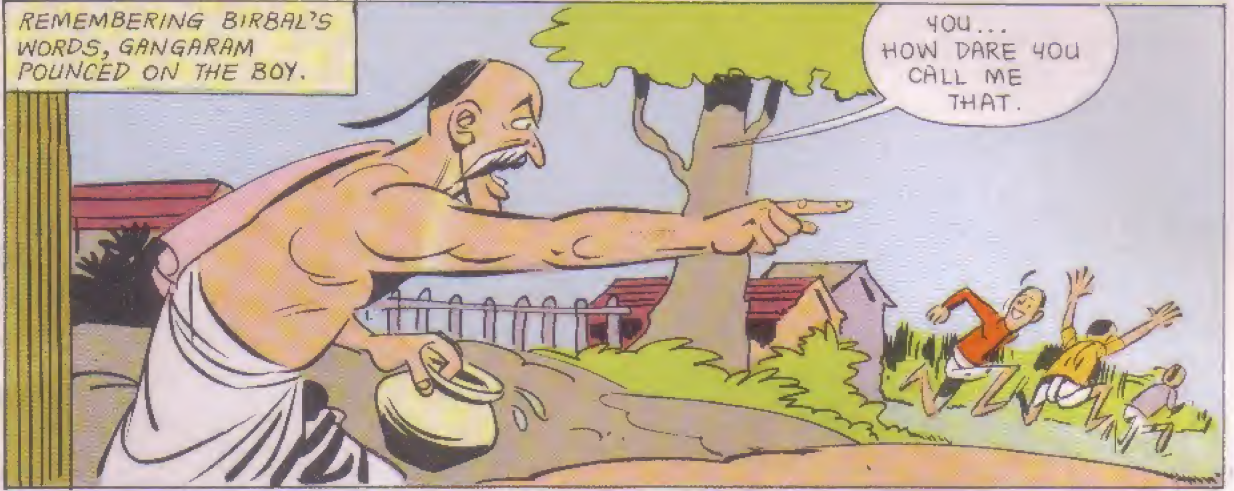
YOU MEAN EVERYONE
WILL BEGIN TO CALL
ME PANDIT IN JUST
TWO DAYS?

WELL, MAYBE
THREE. BUT YOU
MUST FOLLOW
MY
INSTRUCTIONS.



REMEMBERING BIRBAL'S WORDS, GANGARAM POUNCED ON THE BOY.

YOU...
HOW DARE YOU
CALL ME
THAT.



NOW THE OTHER BOYS TOOK UP THE CUE.

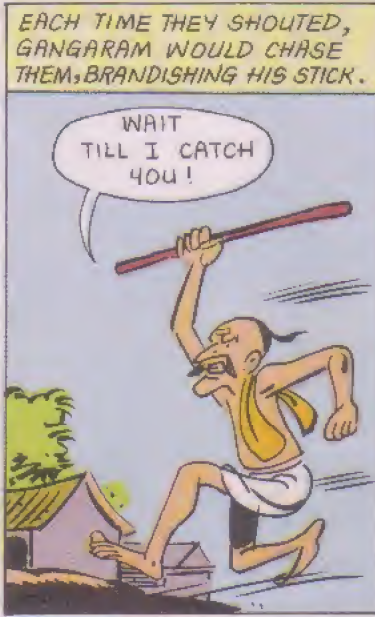
PANDITJI!

OH
PANDITJI!



EACH TIME THEY SHOUTED, GANGARAM WOULD CHASE THEM, BRANDISHING HIS STICK.

WAIT
TILL I CATCH
YOU!



IT BECAME A POPULAR PASTIME IN BARA CHOWK.

YOU WANT TO
HAVE SOME
FUN? JUST
CALL THAT MAN
'PANDITJI!'



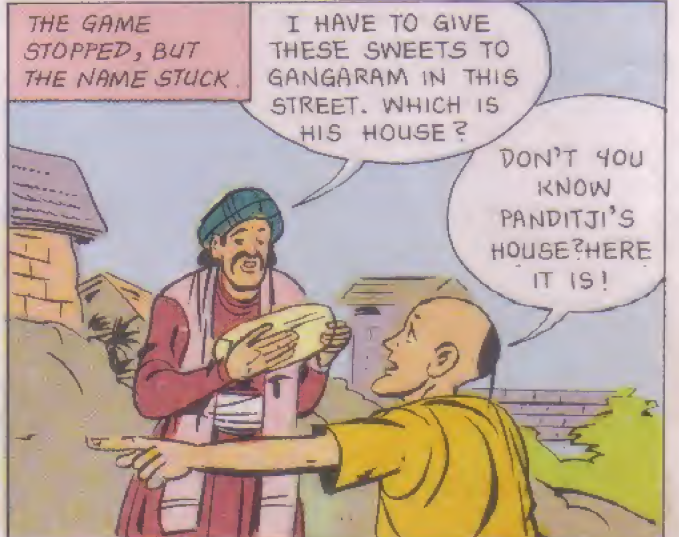
SOON, HOWEVER, THEY TIRED OF THE GAME BECAUSE GANGARAM STOPPED ABUSING THEM.



THE GAME STOPPED, BUT THE NAME STUCK.

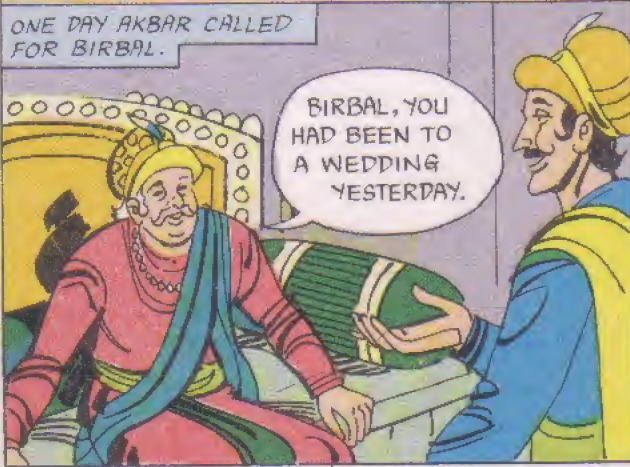
I HAVE TO GIVE THESE SWEETS TO GANGARAM IN THIS STREET. WHICH IS HIS HOUSE?

DON'T YOU
KNOW
PANDITJI'S
HOUSE? HERE
IT IS!



AND CURRY OF COURSE

ONE DAY AKBAR CALLED FOR BIRBAL.



JUST THEN, A COURTIER INTERRUPTED WITH AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE FOR THE EMPEROR, AND THE CONVERSATION REMAINED UNFINISHED. NEXT DAY IN THE DURBAR, AKBAR WANTED TO TEST BIRBAL'S MEMORY. HE TURNED TO HIM -



BIRBAL REALISED THAT AKBAR WAS REFERRING TO THE CONVERSATION OF THE PREVIOUS DAY. PROMPTLY HE SAID -



AKBAR WAS IMMENSELY PLEASED.

WAH! BIRBAL. YOU ARE INDEED GREAT. HERE! TAKE THIS PEARL NECKLACE.

THE COURTIER'S PRESENT WERE PERPLEXED.

WHY, THE KING MUST REALLY BE FOND OF CURRY. HE GAVE BIRBAL A PRESENT JUST FOR MENTIONING THE WORD CURRY.

AFTER THE COURT HAD DISPERSED, THEY GOT TOGETHER FOR DISCUSSIONS.

WE MUST BRING THE BEST CURRY FOR THE EMPEROR TOMORROW.

YES, LOTS OF IT.

SURELY HE WILL REWARD US TOO.

THE NEXT DAY THEY ARRIVED IN THE DURBAR WITH THEIR SERVANTS CARRYING HUGE URNS OF CURRY ON THEIR HEADS.

WHAT'S ALL THIS? WHAT ARE THESE MEN CARRYING TO THE COURT?

WE HAVE BROUGHT CURRY FOR YOU, JAHANPANAH. WE KNOW NOW HOW MUCH YOU LIKE IT.

AKBAR UNDERSTOOD AT ONCE—

YOU FOOLS! WHAT BIRBAL SAID YESTERDAY WAS IN ANOTHER CONTEXT. AS A PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR STUPIDITY I WILL MAKE YOU EAT ALL THIS CURRY JUST NOW.

FORGIVE US! WE WILL NOT ACT IN HASTE NEXT TIME.

BIRBAL HAD A GOOD LAUGH.

THE ONLY ROOSTER

AKBAR LOVED TO PLAY HARMLESS TRICKS ON BIRBAL.

SO MANY TIMES HAVE I TRIED TO TRAP HIM, BUT HE ALWAYS GETS THE BETTER OF ME.

THIS TIME I WILL GET EVEN WITH HIM.

THE NEXT DAY AT THE COURT, HE SENT BIRBAL ON AN ERRAND ADDRESSING THE REST OF THE COURTIERS, AKBAR SAID —

HERE IS A BASKET OF EGGS. I WANT EACH ONE OF YOU TO TAKE AN EGG AND KEEP IT HIDDEN.

LATER, WHEN I ASK YOU TO DIVE INTO THE POOL, YOU MUST PRETEND YOU FOUND IT THERE. UNDERSTOOD?

YES, JAHANPANAH

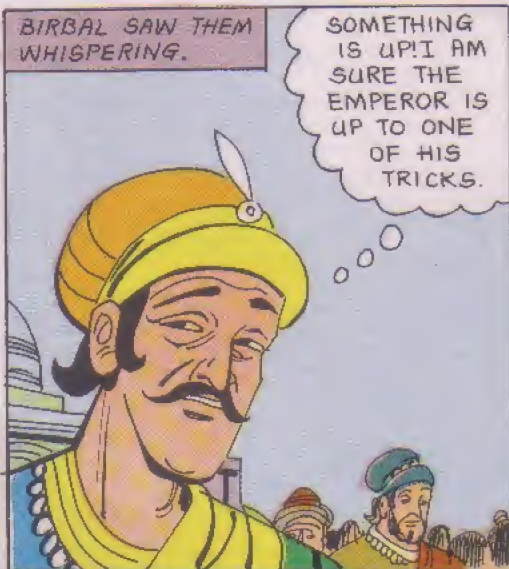
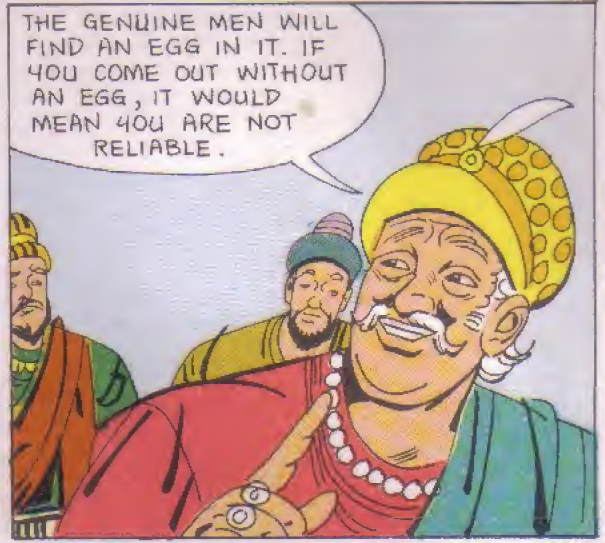
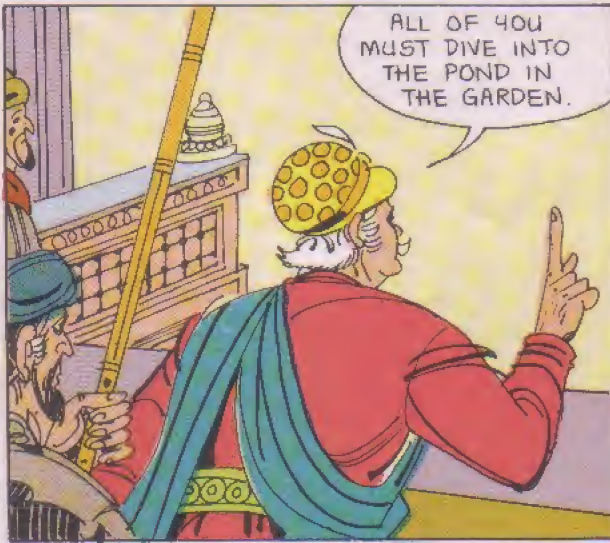
QUEER IDEAS HIS MAJESTY HAS.

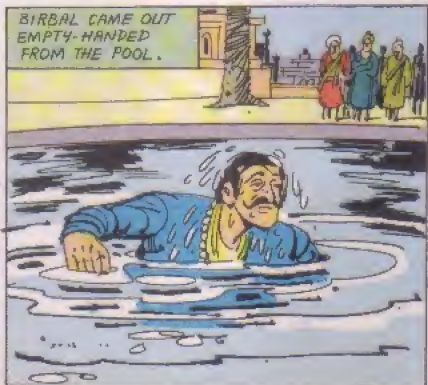
BETTER HUMOUR HIM AND DO AS HE SAYS.

MUST BE A NEW GAME HE HAS THOUGHT OF.

BUT WHEN BIRBAL RETURNED TO THE COURT, THEY UNDERSTOOD.

BIRBAL, YESTERDAY I HAD A STRANGE DREAM. FROM IT I GOT AN EXCELLENT IDEA FOR TESTING THE ABILITIES OF THE MEN OF MY COURT.



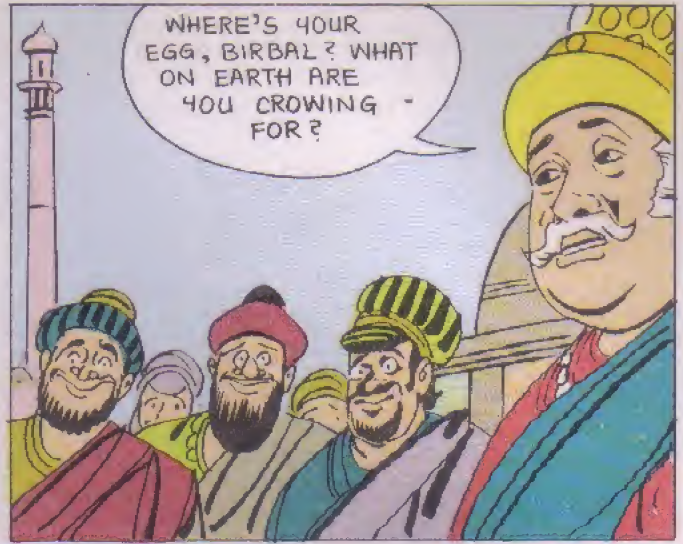


AFTER SHAKING THE WATER OFF HIS BODY, HE STOOD UP.

COCK-A-DOODLE DOO!
COCK-A-DOODLE DOO!



WHERE'S YOUR
EGG, BIRBAL? WHAT
ON EARTH ARE
YOU CROWING -
FOR?



BIRBAL
REPLIED -

SURELY
YOU KNOW
THAT ONLY HENS
LAY EGGS, NOT
COCKS.



YOU HAVE
A LARGE
BROOD OF
HENS,
HUZOOR.



BUT I AM
THE ONLY
ROOSTER!



THE COURTIER'S FELT VERY
EMBARRASSED.

HA HA! TRULY
BIRBAL, YOU ARE
REALLY ONE OF
A KIND!



PARTING OF FRIENDS

ONE DAY, WHILE BIRBAL WAS AWAY ON A MISSION, EMPEROR AKBAR CALLED HIS COURTIER'S TOGETHER

I AM A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT PRINCE SALIM.

WHY HUZDOR?

HE'S A FINE BOY.

AND SO HANDSOME TOO.

AKBAR INTERRUPTED —

YES, I KNOW HE IS A GOOD BOY, BUT OF LATE, HE HAS FALLEN INTO BAD COMPANY.

OH, YOU MEAN THAT BOY, YASIN?

YES, THAT FELLOW IS NO GOOD.

SALIM HAD LEARNT THE ROYAL DUTIES SO WELL.

I WAS REALLY PROUD OF HIM. BUT NOW ALL HE DOES IS LAZE ABOUT ALL DAY, PLAY CARDS, AND GO FOR SHIKAR.

YES, THAT'S TRUE. BUT HUZDOR, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE A 16-YEAR-OLD FROM HIS FRIEND.

THAT IS WHY I AM CONSULTING YOU. AFTER ALL, AS THE PRINCE, HIS FUTURE IS YOUR CONCERN TOO.

WE WILL TRY TO FIND A WAY.

BUT A WHOLE MONTH PASSED. NO ONE COULD THINK OF A PLAN TO CORRECT THE PRINCE.

HUZOOR, SEND YASIN AWAY TO ANOTHER PLACE.

NO, THAT WILL ONLY TURN SALIM AGAINST ME.

WHY NOT TELL SALIM WHAT YOU THINK OF YASIN?

NO, MIRZA, THAT MIGHT MAKE SALIM MORE FOND OF HIM.

WHEN BIRBAL RETURNED FROM HIS TRAVELS, AKBAR TURNED TO HIM FOR HELP.

YOU WANT TO SEPARATE THE TWO YOUNG MEN. WHY, GIVE ME JUST TWO DAYS.

NEXT DAY, AT COURT, BIRBAL CALLED YASIN —

BZZZZ!

ALOUD HE SAID —

NOW, DON'T BREATHE A WORD OF THIS TO ANYONE.

BIRBAL MUST BE GOING CRAZY. HE JUST SAID, "JUST ONE SEED IN EVERY MANGO!"

AS SOON AS THE COURT
DISPERSED, SALIM RUSHED
TO MEET YASIN.

WHAT WAS IT?
WHAT SECRET
DID BIRBAL
TELL YOU?

NOTHING HE
JUST
WHISPERED
SOME NON-
SENSE.



SALIM WAS NOT CONVINCED.

HE COULDN'T HAVE CALLED
YOU IN THE DURBAR JUST
TO WHISPER NONSENSE.

IT'S
TRUE. EVEN
I CANNOT
UNDERSTAND
IT.



BUT SURELY HE MUST
HAVE SAID SOME-
THING.

ALL RIGHT, IF YOU
INSIST. ALL HE
SAID WAS "JUST
ONE SEED IN
EVERY MANGO?"



YOU ARE HIDING SOME-
THING FROM ME, YASIN.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE
MY FRIEND.

OF COURSE I AM
I AM TELLING
YOU THE
TRUTH.



I DON'T
BELIEVE YOU,
YASIN.

BUT IT IS
TRUE. HE SAID
JUST THAT.
MAYBE HE'S
GOING
CRAZY.



BUT BIRBAL, WHO WAS SECRETLY
OVERHEARING THE CONVERSATION,
WAS FAR FROM CRAZY.

YASIN, I DON'T WANT
TO TALK TO YOU EVER
AGAIN IN MY LIFE.

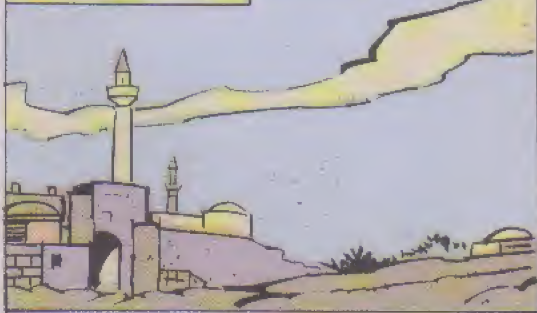
IF YOU DON'T
TRUST ME,
I TOO DON'T
WANT YOU
AS A FRIEND.



AND SOON, SALIM WENT BACK
TO HIS ROYAL DUTIES.

THE PHASES OF THE MOON

ONCE AKBAR SENT BIRBAL TO KABUL ON A SECRET ROYAL MISSION.



BIRBAL TRIED TO MINGLE WITH THE LOCAL CROWD, BUT—

I SUSPECT THAT MAN! HE DOESN'T LOOK LIKE AN ORDINARY PERSON.

YES, THOUGH HE POSES TO BE ONE OF US, HE IS OBVIOUSLY AN OUTSIDER.



WHY, HE MUST BE A SPY.

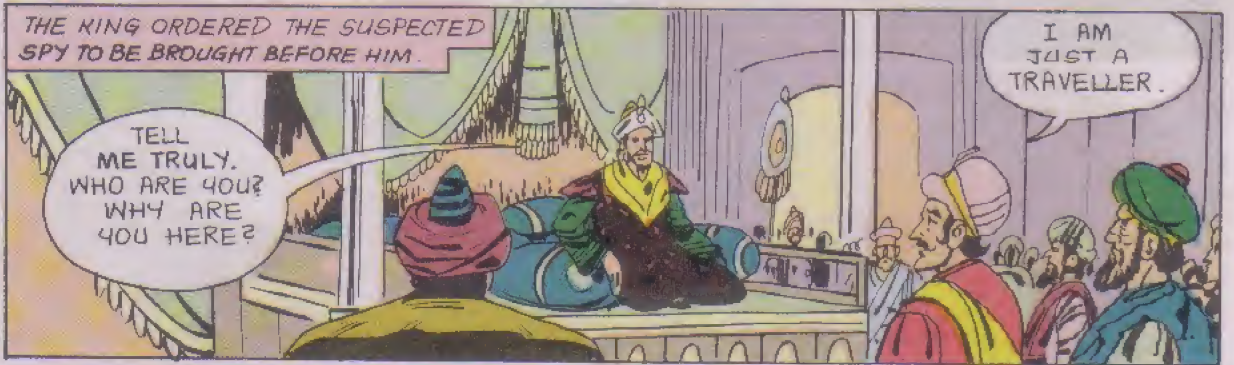
LET'S REPORT HIM TO OUR KING.



THE KING ORDERED THE SUSPECTED SPY TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE HIM.

TELL ME TRULY. WHO ARE YOU? WHY ARE YOU HERE?

I AM JUST A TRAVELLER.



I HAVE TRAVELLED THROUGH MANY KINGDOMS AND ARRIVED HERE.

IS THAT SO?



WELL, SINCE YOU HAVE TRAVELLED SO MUCH AND SEEN SO MUCH OF THE WORLD, TELL ME, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MY RULE?



BIRBAL PAUSED
TO THINK —

YOU ARE
LIKE THE
FULL MOON.
NO PHASE OF
THE MOON CAN
COMPARE WITH
IT FOR GLORY.

THE KING LOOKED PLEASED.
AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT,
HE ADDED —

AND WHAT OF YOUR
OWN KING ? WHAT
DO YOU THINK
OF HIM ?

OH HIM !
HE IS LIKE THE
CRESCENT MOON
—THIN AND
WEAK.

I AM VERY
PLEASED WITH YOU.
HERE TAKE THIS
BAG OF COINS AS
A GIFT.

THANK YOU,
SIRE. YOU ARE
INDEED KIND.

BIRBAL RETURNED TO DELHI, BUT
NEWS OF HIS TRIP HAD REACHED
THERE. AT DIWAN-I-KHAS—

TELL ME,
HUSSAIN KHAN.
WHAT SECRET
OF BIRBAL DO
YOU POSSESS ?

OH, JAHANPANAH ! YOU
KNOW HE HAD GONE
TO KABUL LAST
MONTH.

YES, YES, I HAD
SENT HIM THERE.
SO WHAT ?

BUT DO YOU KNOW
WHAT HE SAID TO
THE KING
THERE ?

WHAT ?

HE PRETENDS TO BE YOUR LOYAL AIDE. BUT WHEN HE WENT TO KABUL HE DECLARED IN THE COURT THERE THAT THE KING OF KABUL WAS LIKE A FULL MOON, WHILE YOU WERE JUST A CRESCENT MOON.

IS THAT SO? I WILL ASK HIM TOMORROW IN THE COURT.

SURE ENOUGH, NEXT DAY—

BIRBAL, I HAVE A SERIOUS CHARGE AGAINST YOU.

ME, JAHANPANA? WHAT HAVE I DONE?

I HAVE COME TO KNOW THAT IN THE COURT OF KABUL, JUST TO FLATTER THE KING THERE, YOU MADE DEMAISING REMARKS ABOUT ME.

THAT'S NOT TRUE!

TELL ME ON OATH, DID YOU NOT COMPARE ME TO A CRESCENT MOON, AND THE KING OF KABUL TO A FULL MOON?

THAT I DID, SIRE.

HOW DARE YOU, BIRBAL! YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE MY MOST LOYAL AIDE.

I DID MAKE THAT COMPARISON, SIRE. BUT DON'T YOU REALISE THAT THE FULL MOON IS DESTINED TO DECREASE IN GLORY AND SIZE?

IT IS THE CRESCENT MOON THAT IS FULL OF PROMISE FOR THE FUTURE. IT WILL GROW IN GLORY DAY BY DAY. DON'T THE MUSLIMS AND HINDUS VENERATE THE MOON OF THE SECOND LUNAR DAY?

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER THAN TO SUSPECT YOU, AS USUAL, BIRBAL, YOU WIN.

VALUE OF WASTE

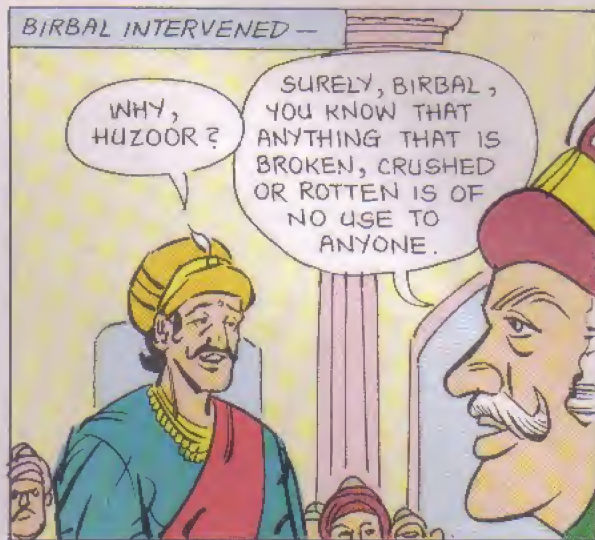
ONE DAY IN THE COURT—



SEE THIS EXCELLENT VASE!

NO, IT'S A LITTLE CHIPPED. NEVER SHOW ME ANYTHING BROKEN.

BIRBAL INTERVENED —



WHY, HUZOOR?

SURELY, BIRBAL, YOU KNOW THAT ANYTHING THAT IS BROKEN, CRUSHED OR ROTTEN IS OF NO USE TO ANYONE.

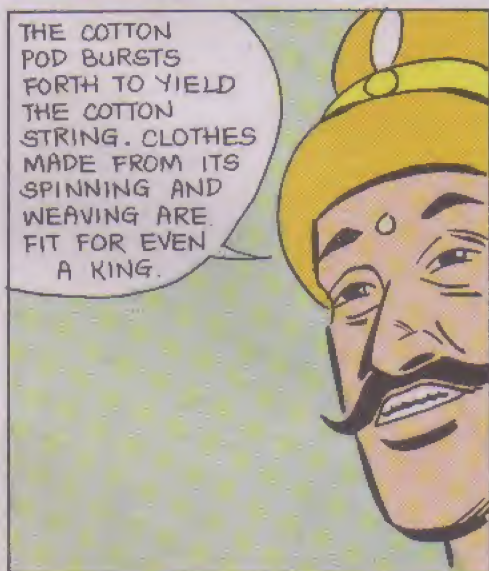


SOMETIMES MAYBE, BUT THAT IS NOT ALWAYS TRUE.

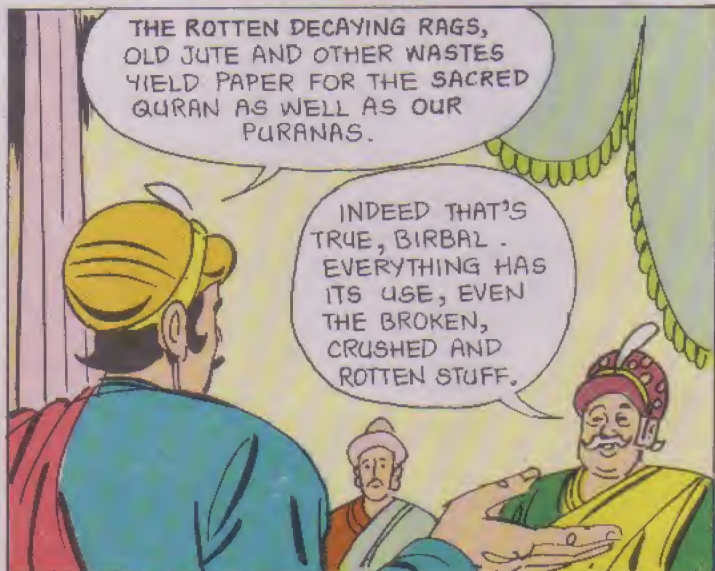
PROVE IT TO ME, BIRBAL.



THE JUICE WE GET FROM SUGARCANE BY BREAKING AND CRUSHING GIVES SUGAR, JAGGERY AND DELICIOUS SWEETS, FIT TO BE A DIVINE OFFERING.



THE COTTON POD BURSTS FORTH TO YIELD THE COTTON STRING. CLOTHES MADE FROM ITS SPINNING AND WEAVING ARE FIT FOR EVEN A KING.

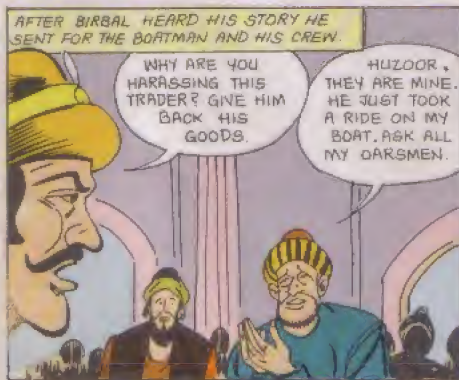


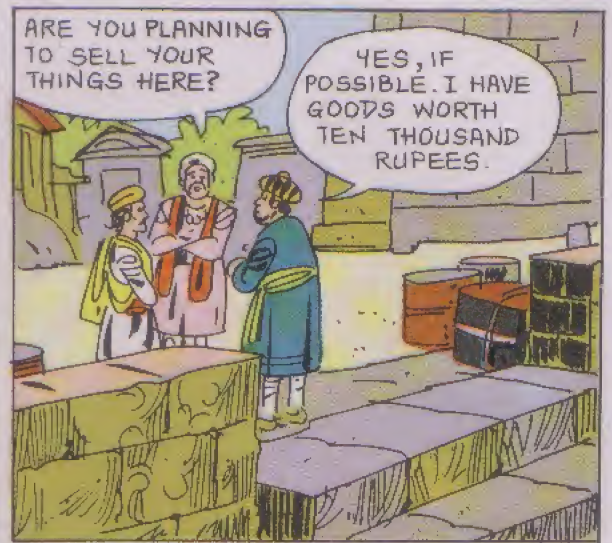
THE ROTTEN DECAYING RAGS, OLD JUTE AND OTHER WASTES YIELD PAPER FOR THE SACRED QURAN AS WELL AS OUR PURANAS.

INDEED THAT'S TRUE, BIRBAL. EVERYTHING HAS ITS USE, EVEN THE BROKEN, CRUSHED AND ROTTEN STUFF.

THE TRUE OWNER

ONE DAY AKBAR, BIRBAL AND THE OTHER COURTIERS WERE IN THE DIWAN-I-AM. SUDDENLY —

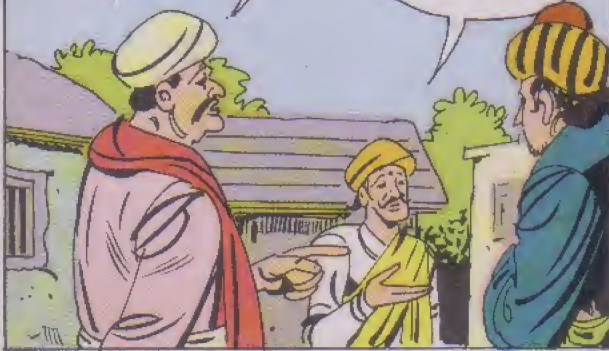




THE TRADER NOW TURNED TO HIS MUNIM WHO WAS IN REALITY BIRBAL IN DISGUISE.

MUNIMJI, JUST CHECK THE GOODS FOR THEIR WORTH.

SHOW US SOME SAMPLES.



BIRBAL EXAMINED THE CARPETS CRITICALLY.

LET ME CHECK THE PILE AND THE DESIGN OF YOUR CARPETS. Hmm, NOT VERY GOOD I'M AFRAID.



EVEN FIVE THOUSAND IS TOO MUCH FOR THESE INFERIOR QUALITY CARPETS.

YES, YOU ARE RIGHT. WE SHOULDN'T PAY MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND.



WELL, IF THAT'S THE MAXIMUM YOU ARE READY TO PAY, I'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT IT.

AGREED. WE'LL COME TOMORROW TO COLLECT THE GOODS AND PAY THE MONEY.



NOW THE TWO WENT TO THE INN WHERE THE TRADER WAS STAYING.

I HEARD YOU HAVE BROUGHT GOODS WORTH 10,000 FOR SALE.

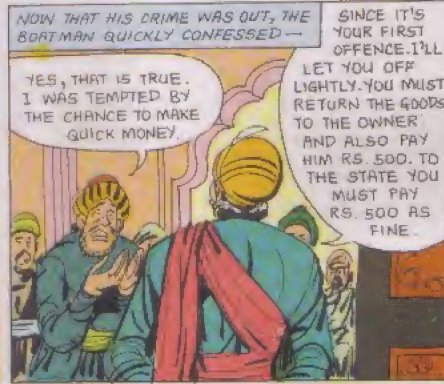
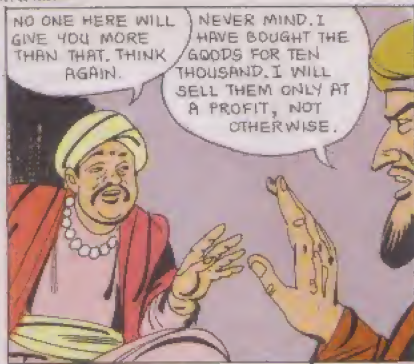
THEY ARE THE FINEST OF CARPETS.



WELL, THE DEMAND FOR CARPETS IS RATHER LOW. WILL YOU SELL FOR FIVE THOUSAND?

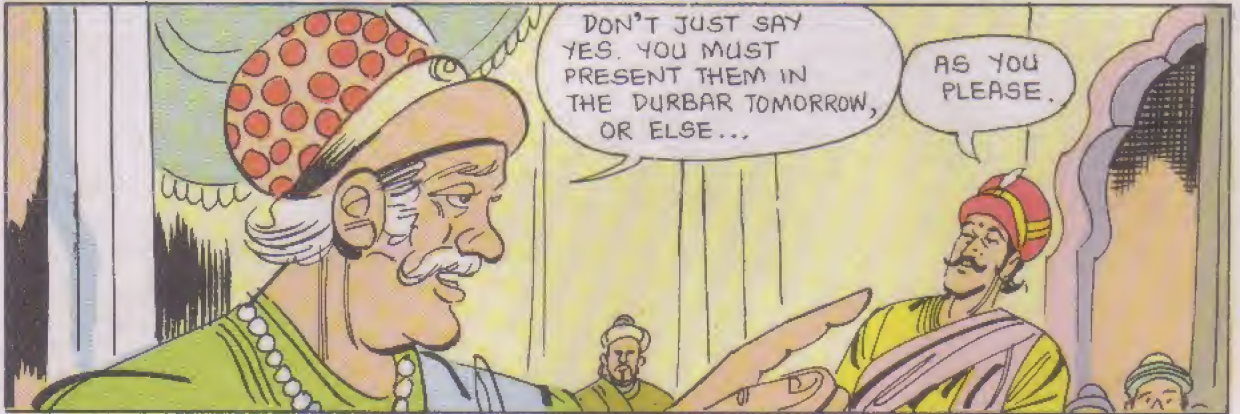
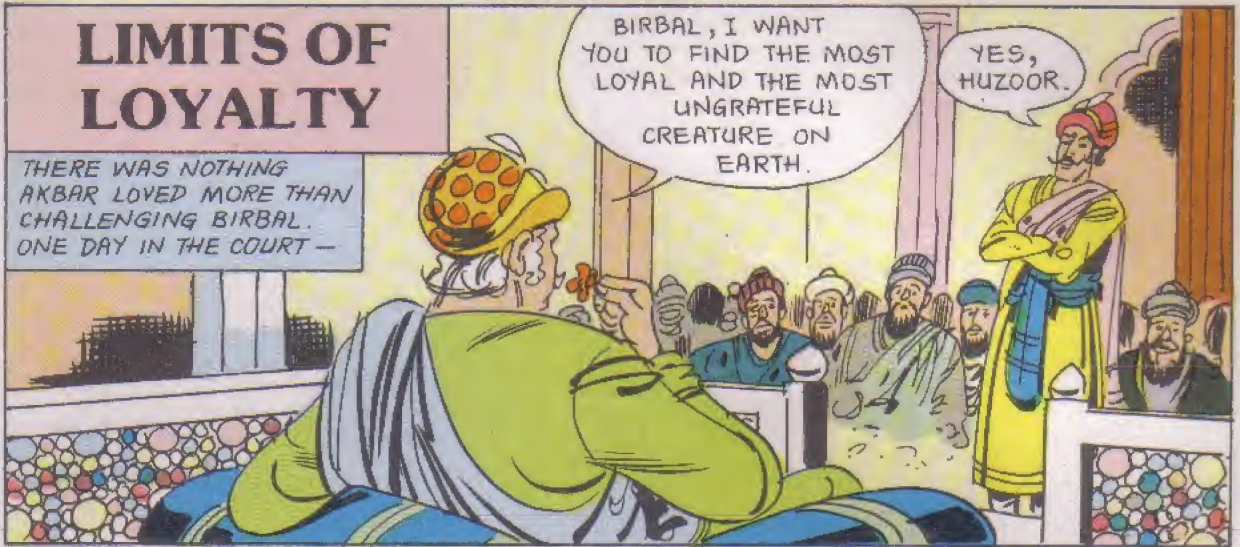
WHAAAT?!





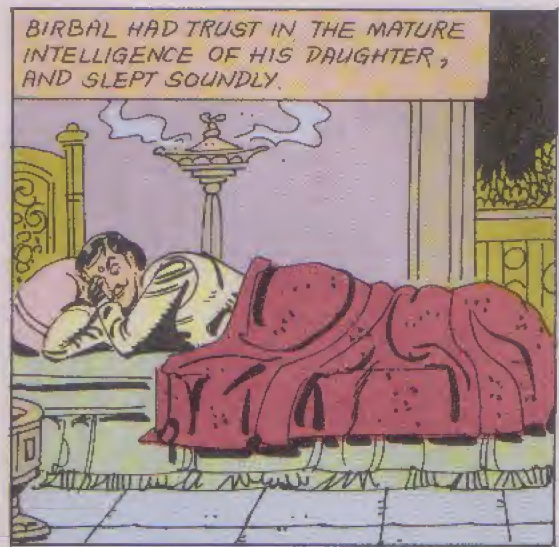
LIMITS OF LOYALTY

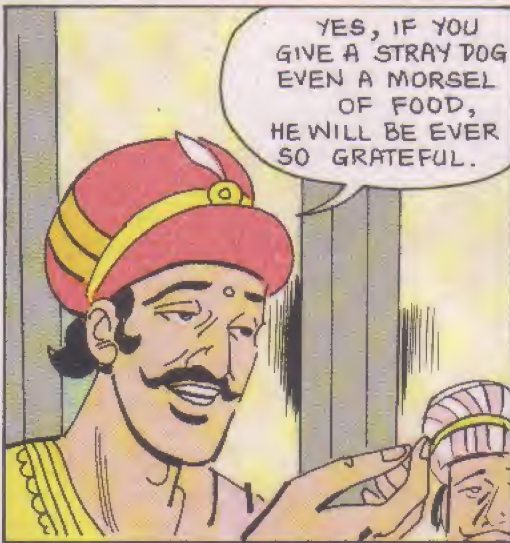
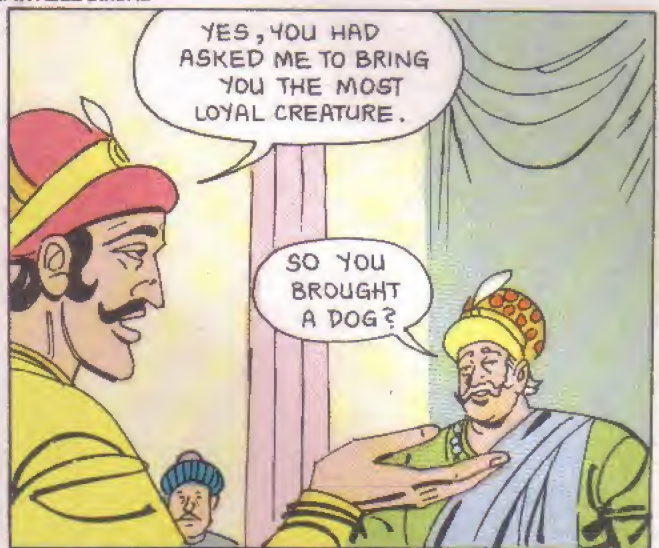
THERE WAS NOTHING AKBAR LOVED MORE THAN CHALLENGING BIRBAL. ONE DAY IN THE COURT —



BIRBAL AGREED TO DO AS ASKED. BUT ON GOING HOME, HIS DAUGHTER SAID —









BUT WE
MUST THEN
REWARD THE
DOG AND
PUNISH THE
SON-IN-LAW.



LET THE DOG BE
FED SUMPTUOUSLY.
AS FOR THE SON-IN-
LAW, LET HIM BE
HANGED.

BUT...
BUT...
HUZDOR..



NO BUTS, BIRBAL, I
BELIEVE IN
JUSTICE.

BUT HE
IS ONLY A
SPECIMEN, ONLY
A REPRESENTATIVE
OF ALL
SONS-IN-LAW.



SO ?

IF YOU DECIDE
TO AWARD A
PUNISHMENT, ALL
OF THEM MUST
BE HANGED.



WHAT
DO YOU
MEAN ?

I MEAN,
YOU WILL
HAVE TO HANG
ALL
SONS-IN-LAW...

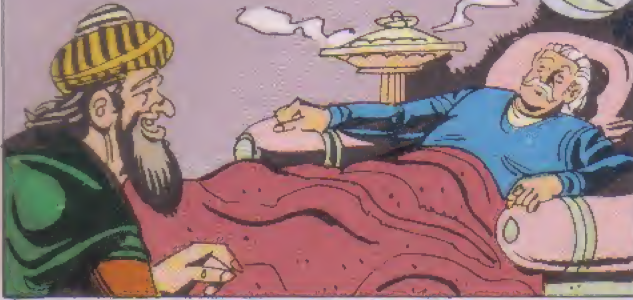


...INCLUDING ME AND
YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS.
EVERYONE OF US IS
SOMEBODY'S
SON-IN-LAW.

IN THAT
CASE, LET
HIM GO!

AND OFF IT FLEW

AKBAR WAS FOND OF STORIES. HE COULD NOT SLEEP UNLESS HE LISTENED TO A NEW TALE EVERY NIGHT.



ONE BY ONE, HIS COURTIERS WOULD BE SUMMONED.

HURRY UP, ASIM. TODAY IT IS YOUR TURN TO TELL A STORY.

AH YES! AND THE KING DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR THE GOOD OLD STORIES. WE MUST TELL NEW TALES TO HIS MAJESTY.



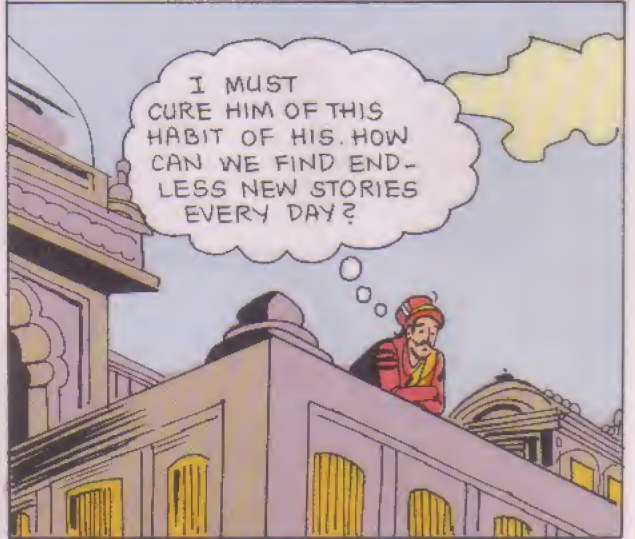
ONE EVENING, IT WAS BIRBAL'S TURN. BIRBAL WOULD SPIN A LONG YARN. EACH TIME HE PAUSED FOR BREATH—

AND THEN?

ALL HE HAS TO SAY IS 'AND THEN?' IT'S MY POOR JAW THAT GETS WEARY TALKING.

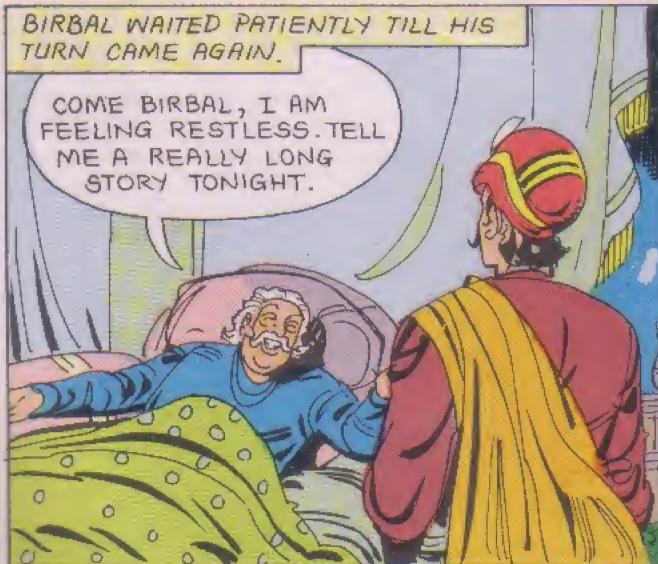


I MUST CURE HIM OF THIS HABIT OF HIS. HOW CAN WE FIND ENDLESS NEW STORIES EVERY DAY?



BIRBAL WAITED PATIENTLY TILL HIS TURN CAME AGAIN.

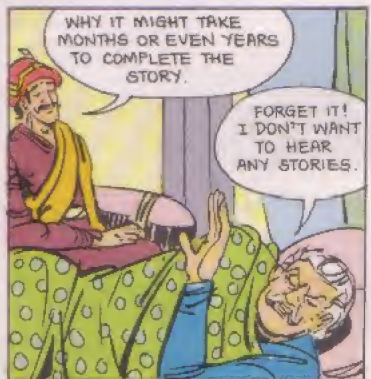
COME BIRBAL, I AM FEELING RESTLESS. TELL ME A REALLY LONG STORY TONIGHT.



BIRBAL SETTLED DOWN COMFORTABLY AND BEGAN.

ONE DAY, A RICH FARMER ORDERED A GRANARY TO BE MADE.



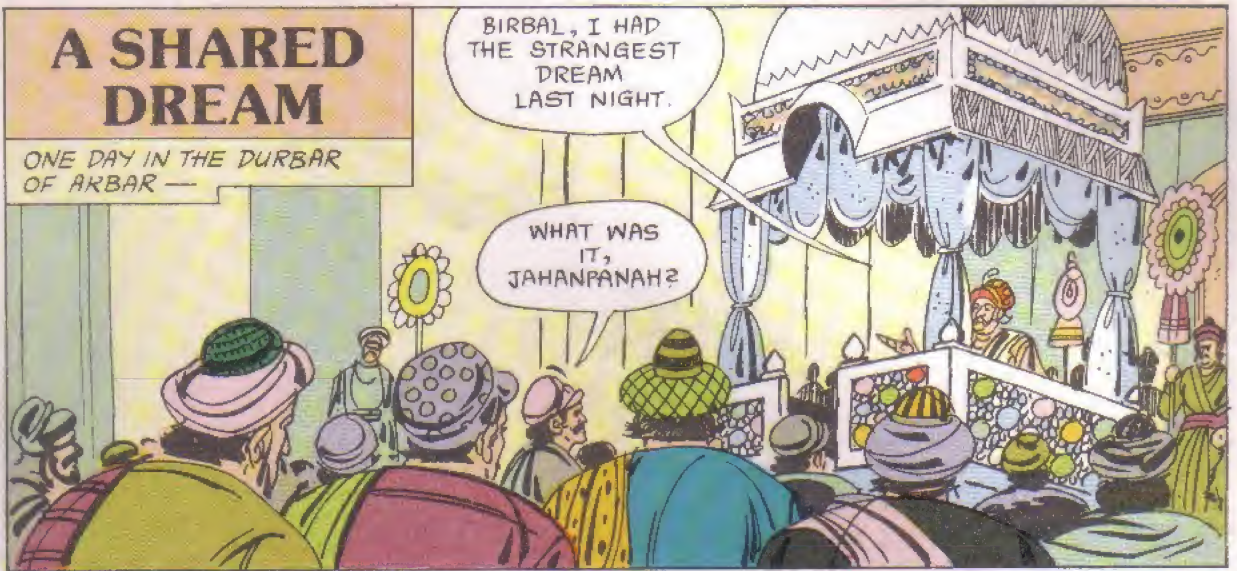


A SHARED DREAM

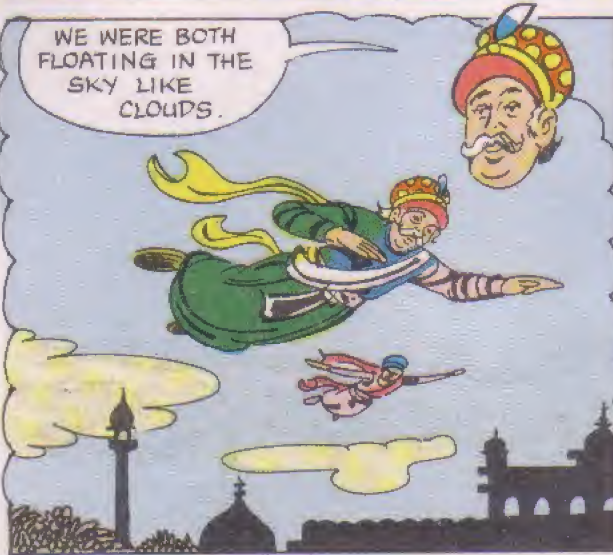
ONE DAY IN THE DURBAR OF ARBAR —

BIRBAL, I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM LAST NIGHT.

WHAT WAS IT, JAHANPANA?



WE WERE BOTH FLOATING IN THE SKY LIKE CLOUDS.



THEN SUDDENLY WE BOTH FELL DOWN WITH A BANG.



I FELL INTO A BIG PIT FILLED WITH HONEY.



BUT YOU, BIRBAL, FELL INTO A GUTTER.

HUH!



